Offprint from

Ki Baruch Hu

Ancient Near Eastern, Biblical, and Judaic Studies
in Honor of
Baruch A. Levine

edited by
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and
Lawrence H. Schiffman

EISENbrauns
Winona Lake, Indiana
1999
The Sukkot Wine Libation

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Sukkot was the leading cultic festival throughout the Second Temple Period. After the autumnal harvest brought the agricultural year to its close, vast crowds made the pilgrimage to the Jerusalem Temple to celebrate and give thanks. The beginning of the rainy season, Sukkot was also the festival at which the cult sought to ensure ample rain for the coming year. Elaborate rituals including processions, vigils, fertility rites, and prayers were directed to this end. Each day a priest poured a double libation of water and wine upon the altar. Water was drawn from the Siloam Pool, carried with great fanfare in a formal procession to the Temple, and placed in a bowl set on the south-western corner of the altar. The priest poured a libation of wine into a second bowl in such a way that the two libations flowed onto the altar simultaneously. Rabbinic descriptions of the libation procession, its preparatory all-night celebration, the great joy experienced, and the crowds in attendance make it clear that the ceremony was of great significance. The

Author's note: Our teacher Baruch Levine has contributed a great deal to our knowledge of the cult, and it is an honor to dedicate this study of a cultic ritual to him.

1. M. Sukk. 4:9-10. The procession did not take place on the Sabbath.
2. M. Sukk. 4:9-10; t. Sukk. 3:3, 14-16; b. Sukk. 48b, y. Sukk. 4:8, 54d. The importance of the rite is seen in the Mishnaic tradition that a priest who performed the libation incorrectly was pelted with citrons by the incensed crowd (m. Sukk. 48). This tradition is generally interpreted as evidence of a conflict between the Pharisees and Sadducees concerning the oral law, since the libation is not explicitly mentioned in scripture. Elsewhere I have questioned this interpretation (“The Sadducees and the Water Libation,” JQR 84 [1994] 413-419), but the peltig demonstrates that the people considered the libation of such importance that they took drastic action when some aspect of the rite was not performed properly. Improper performance of the ritual jeopardized the expected effect—the production of copious rain—which would have disastrous consequences. In what may be a parallel tradition, the historian Josephus reports that Alexander Janneus was pelted by citrons when he stood to sacrifice
water libation was a rain-making ritual, as both rabbinic sources and the comparative study of religion attest and has merited a great deal of scholarly interest. The background and function of the wine libation is less clear, and it is rarely mentioned either in studies of the water libation or in general treatments of the Sukkot rituals. This study attempts to fill this lacuna by investigating the origin and function of the Sukkot wine libation.

at the altar, although he does not mention the libation specifically (Am. 12:372). This account also reflects the large crowds in attendance and the great importance associated with the festival rituals.


5. J. Licht, "Sukkot," Encyclopaedia Biblica 5,1037–44; S. Safrai, A'iyah Lareggl Biyeme Bayit Seni (Tel-Aviv: 'Am Hasefer, 1965); A. J. Wensinck, Arabic New Year and the Feast of Tabernacles (Amsterdam: Uitgave van de Koninklijke Academie van Wetenschappen te Amsterdam, 1925); H. Riesenfeld, Jésus Transfiguré (Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1947); H. Ulfgrund, Feast and Future: Revelation 7:9–17 and the Feast of Tabernacles (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1989); Patai, Man and Temple, 24–104. The lack of attention to the wine libation is perhaps explained by the fact that wine libations typically accompanied animal sacrifices throughout the year. A wine libation on Sukkot was routine. However the mixing of the wine and water libations on Sukkot is an independent ritual that points to the special importance of the Sukkot wine libation. In addition, ordinary wine libations were probably poured on the base of the altar. Only on Sukkot were wine libations poured together with the water libation into bowls perched on the corner of the altar. See Maimonides, Mishneh Torah, Laws of Daily and Additional Offerings 10:6–9, Laws of Sacrifices 2:1 and Kesef Mishneh, ad loc. This is confirmed by the eyewitness testimony of Sir 50:14–15: "He stretched out his hand to the cup, and poured out some of the blood of the grape. He poured it out at the foot or the altar, a pleasing odor unto the Most High, the King
Wine in Biblical Religion

A vintage festival followed the autumnal harvest throughout biblical times. In Judges 9:27 the Shechemites gather to tread their grapes and celebrate a festival of jubilation (hallit). They then return to their temple and enjoy a sacred feast. Judges 21:19 reports of an annual pilgrimage festival celebrated at Shiloh. That the Benjaminites hide in the vineyards to carry off the women dancing there points to a vintage celebration. In Israel grapes ripen in August and September and are harvested at this time, so the festivals at Shechem and Shiloh were undoubtedly celebrated then. The dancing, feasting, and ecstatic celebration of the hallit are typical elements of harvest festivals and recall the rejoicing characteristic of Sukkot. Moreover, the origin of the custom of residing in festival booths probably derives from the shady booths erected for watchmen in vineyards and used as shelters by the workers during their arduous vintage labors. Thus the origin of the central festival rite reveals a strong connection to vintage celebrations.

The Covenant Code refers to the autumnal festival as the 'festival of in-gathering' (tasipp), without specifying the object of the harvest (Exodus 23:16). Leviticus 23:39 also mentions the gathering of the fruit of the land in general terms. Deuteronomy 16:13–15, however, the first source to call the autumnal festival Sukkot, explicitly mentions the "in-gathering from the threshing places and wine-press." The background is again the vintage, while the emphasis on rejoicing echoes the hallit of Judges 9. Thus both narrative and legal traditions of All." (So the Greek. The Hebrew preserves essentially the same reading.) I say "probably" (and cite Maimonides' interpretation) because the rabbinic sources are ambiguous; see Siphre Num. 110, §107; m. Zebah. 6:2; and b. Zebah. 91b. In any case, the use of wine in the cult antedates the libations prescribed by the Priestly Code to accompany animal sacrifices.


8. Wellhausen, Prolegomena, 93–94; de Vaux, Ancient Israel, 495, 501–2; Pedersen, Israel, 2.418–19; G. W. MacRae, "The Meaning and Evolution of the Feast of Tabernacles," CBQ 22 (1960) 215–76; J. Döllner, "Der Wein im Bibel und Talmud," Bib 4 (1923) 157–58; W. Dommershausen, "Yayin," TDOT 6:66. However, Y. Kaufmann (Toldot Ha'manah Hayyine'elit [4 vols.; Jerusalem: Bialik, 1937–56] 2.125–56) and M. Haran (Temples and Temple-Service in Ancient Israel [Oxford: Clarendon, 1978; reprinted Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1985] 299) do not associate these celebrations with the autumnal festival. Wellhausen (Prolegomena, 94–95), de Vaux (Ancient Israel, 496), and others suggest that the autumnal festival is the annual pilgrimage to which 1 Sam 11:3 alludes. Eli may have assumed that Hannah was drunk from the wine typically consumed at such vintage festivals (1 Sam 1:14). As in Judges 21:19, the festival took place at Shiloh.
testify that the autumnal festival included a vintage celebration. In most agricultural societies wine has great importance, both for cultic and popular use, and popular vintage celebrations are almost universal. 9

The wine or vintage celebration associated with the autumnal festival may have been a firstfruit festival in part. In the early period of Israelite worship the three annual harvest festivals were occasions for bringing firstfruits, 10 which biblical legislation required from all crops. 11 Before its linkage to the Pesah sacrifice, the masoretic festival was a ritual feast of the firstfruits of the harvest hastily baked into coarse bread. 12 The communal counterpart to the masoret was the sheaf (Yom), the first of the new crop presented at the Temple (Lev 23:9–14). On the second pilgrimage festival, which celebrates the completion of the grain harvest (the hag haqqōr; Exod 23:16), two loaves of bread served as an offering of the firstfruits of grain in mature form (Lev 23:15–21). 13 The name of the festival, yōm habbakkukārām ‘the Day of Firstfruits’, expresses this understanding of the loaves (Num 28:26). 14 On Sukkot, the final harvest of the year, grapes and olives were the chief firstfruit offerings, as the vintage and olive-harvest took place at this time. 15 These may have been brought in the form of wine and oil, the completed products of the vat and winepress. 16 It is also possible that the commandment of Lev 23:40 to bring the “fruit of goodly trees,” later interpreted as the citron, originally instructed the Israelite to bring the most beautiful firstfruits of his trees.

10. Exod 23:17–19, 34:23–6; Wellhausen, Prolegomena, 8q; Pedersen, Israel, 3:305–6. Deut 16:13–17 commands that when pilgrims come to celebrate the three annual festivals they must bring gifts, a later reflex of the common practice of bringing firstfruits at these times. The elaborate description of the ritual in Deuteronomy 26, however, does not link the firstfruits to any particular time of year. See Philo Special Laws 2.220–22.
11. Exod 23:19; 34:26; Deut 26:2; Ezek 44:39; Neh 10:36. Thus Philo (Special Laws 2.216) writes that firstfruits come from every fruit. On the rabbinic law, see De Vaux, Ancient Israel, 496; Wellhausen, Prolegomena, 87.
13. Deut 16:9–12 calls it “the Festival of Weeks” and does not mention the loaves.
15. See n. 8. Num 13:20 notes that the spies entered Israel at the “season of the firstfruits of grapes.”
16. The LXX translates Exod 22:28, μη διψωτε οὔτε αὐτῇ τῷ δόξῳ τῆς θήρας τὸν πόλεμον (‘You shall not hold back the firstfruits of your threshing-floor and press’ [NRSV = ‘you shall not pull off the skimming of the first yield of your vats’]). Also see Pedersen, Israel, 2:301; and Wellhausen, Prolegomena, 92–99.
Beyond the role of wine in the autumnal festival and as firstfruit offerings, wine libations came to play a wider role in temple worship. Hosea warns the Northern tribes that, because of their corruption, God finds their wine libations and sacrifices unacceptable. Joel laments that "offering and libation have ceased from the House of the Lord." The Psalms, many of which served as cultic liturgy, imply that libations were regular rituals. Libations of wine are prevalent in the Priestly Code, although these libations generally accompany the sacrifices and do not comprise independent rites. Of course the practice of wine libations suggests that wine was regularly consumed in the context of cultic worship. Libations were a tribute to God, but humans enjoyed the bulk of the wine. Thus Amos 2:8 protests those who "drink in the House of their God wine bought with fines they imposed." Drinking wine in the Temple is fine, but the wine must not be purchased with ill-gotten funds. Isa 62:8–9 may even point to a wine festival within the Temple precincts: "Strangers shall not drink your wine for which you have labored; rather, they who have gathered it shall eat it and praise (hillilah) the Lord, and those who have collected it shall drink it in the courts of my sanctuary." Sacrificial feasts probably included wine, although the first explicit testimony to this practice is late.

Libations and vintage celebrations were also prominent in "popular religion." Wine "gladdens God and men" and was considered a cherished

17. Hosea 9:4. These libations were brought on the "feast days" and "festivals" mentioned in the next verse. See F. I. Andersen and D. N. Freedman, Hosea (AB 24; Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1986) 529.
19. A. Weiser, The Psalms (trans. H. Hartwell; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1959) 175; ad Ps 16:5; H. J. Kraus, Worship in Israel (Oxford: Blackwell, 1966) 22; R. Kittel, Die Psalmen (Leipzig: Deichert, 1914) 411. Josephus and the Mishnah report that a golden vine hung above the entrance to the temple, and it is likely that such a prominent icon had more than symbolic significance; see m. Mid. 3:8; Josephus Ant. 15:394; J.W. 5:210–11 (with grape clusters as tall as a man!).
22. The background of this prophecy is obscure. Medieval Jewish exegesis see a reference to second tithe or the fourth-year grapes (kerem ivan; Lev 19:23–25), which rabbinic law mandates be taken to Jerusalem and consumed there (see below). Yet the term "courts of the sanctuary" refers to the Temple courtyards, not simply to Jerusalem. A. Ehrlich (Haanipra Ki-fshuto [reprinted New York: Ktav, 1969] 3:151) explains the allusion as wine consumed with animal sacrifices. C. Westermann (Isaiah 40–66 [London: SCM, 1969] 318) suggests that the prophet speaks of the three pilgrimage festivals. Similarly, P. Volz (Isaiah II [KAT 9; Leipzig: Scholl, 1932] ad loc.), taking note of the 'praise' (hillilah), connects the prophecy to the hillilah celebration of Judg 9:27 and to Sukkot. This accords nicely with my conclusions below.
23. jub. 40:6 mentions that wine should be consumed together with the Pesah offering.
blessing of God, so the Israelite could be expected to show his appreciation whenever he drank. Indeed, wine libations were so pervasive that the prophets lament that they occur on the "roofops and in the streets of Jerusalem," and "by every high hill and leafy tree." The prophets rebuke the people for pouring such libations to foreign gods, not to YHWH, but we can be sure that YHWH received his due share as well. Hosea castigates the deviant forms of behavior at harvest and vintage festivals: "You have loved fornication by every threshing floor and winepress; the new grain shall not join them, and the new wine shall fail them." Jer 31:12–13 prophesies bounteous "new grain and wine and oil," at which time "maidsens shall dance gaily, young men and old alike." The prophet probably has popular vintage celebrations in mind. Traces of such celebrations persist in rabbinic sources.

Thus evidence of wine libations in both cultic and popular celebrations is ample. The ceremonial wine libation on Sukkot, poured together with the water as the culmination of the splendid procession, must have had great significance. But what was its specific nature and purpose? Only a few scholars have considered this question. R. Patai considers the wine libation to have been a rain-making ritual. S. Mowinckel suggests that the wine libation served to ensure a successful grape harvest. Both conjectures attempt to

26. For meals with wine, see Deut 12:14, 1 Sam 25:36, 2 Sam 13:23, Isa 5:12, Qoh 9:7, etc. The tithe that must be brought to Jerusalem included wine, Deut 12:17, 14:23; Neh 13:5, 12.
27. Hos 9:2, as emended in the NJPS translation. See Andersen and Freedman, Hosea, 515, 523.
28. The open space between adjacent vineyards, the mehol (m. Kil. 4:2–9; t. Kil. 3:1), was a place for the dancing of vintage celebrations. See Hertzfeld (ed. A. Kohut; Vienna, 1878–92) 3:91–92, s.v. bbl. M. To'an. 4:8 describes the halcyon days of Israel when the women danced in the vineyards while the men selected their brides. The purported dates are Yom Kippur (the tenth of Tishrei) and the fifteenth of Av. The tenth of Tishrei, five days before Sukkot, corresponds to the time of the vintage. (Should the fifteenth of Av be emended to the fifteenth of Tishrei?) And see J. Morgenstern, "Two Ancient Israelite Agricultural Festivals," JQR n.s. 8 (1917) 31–54.
29. Patai, Man and Temple, 56–57. Patai cites a few examples from Frazier (Golden Bough, 1.250; 2.367, 370), in which wine (and other liquids) is used in various rain-making ceremonies. But the parallels are not convincing, and it is clear that the use of wine in this context is extremely rare.
draw parallels between the two libations and interpret the wine in terms of the water: just as the water libation caused rain, so too the wine libation produced rain or produced its own source. G. W. MacRae is more on target when he suggests: "About the wine-pouring and its significance we know very little; perhaps it reflected an offering of the fruits of the grape-harvest."

This suggestion derives from general biblical legislation requiring firstfruit offerings from all fruits, including grapes. Is there evidence of a ceremonial firstfruit offering of wine or an independent wine festival in postbiblical sources?

**Postbiblical and Rabbinic Literature**

The Qumran Scrolls describe in detail a festival of "new wine." This festival is part of the series of firstfruit festivals occurring at fifty-day intervals. The feast of firstfruits of barley occurs on the first Sunday after Pesah while Shavuot, the feast of firstfruits of wheat, takes place fifty days later, as prescribed by Lev 23:16–17. Fifty days later, on the third of the fifth month, the feast of firstfruits of new wine (mo'ed hatthôrî) occurs, and finally the feast of first fruits of oil takes place fifty days later on the twenty-second of the sixth month. Here the Qumran texts have preserved from ancient times observances that mark the importance of firstfruit offerings. Rabbinic tradition knows only of the new barley offering (the 'omer), brought on the second day of Pesah, and the first wheat offering, brought in the form of two loaves on Shavuot, as spelled out in Lev 23:9–21. For the rabbis the barley offering


32. See n. 11.


34. Leviticus 23 does not specify that the 'omer is to be brought from barley, but that was the consensus of the rabbis (b. Menah. 68b), Philo (Special Laws 2.17), Josephus (Ant. 3.250), and the Temple Scroll (although this part of the text is lost; see Yadin, Temple Scroll, 2.102).
permitted all grains—including wheat—for secular use. All grains, including barley, were proscribed from cultic use until after the Shavuot wheat offering. The Mishnah also prohibits general firstfruit offerings and libations from the new wine before the barley offering but does not prohibit any secular consumption of wine or fruit. In Qumran law, each firstfruit festival sanctioned use of its kind for both cultic and private use. Hence consumption of new wine and oil could not precede the firstfruit offerings on the third of the fifth month, nor could libations of new wine be poured on the altar. This conception of the festivals was apparently derived exegetically from Num 18:12, “All the best of the new oil, wine and grain—the choice parts (מַעְנֵי) that they present to the Lord— I give to you (the priests),” in combination with Lev 23:9–21. Grain had its firstfruit festivals described in Leviticus 23, so wine and oil, grouped with grain in Numbers 18, deserved parallel festivals. And just as Lev 23:15–17 ordained a fifty-day interval between the firstfruit festivals of barley and wheat, so too the wine and oil festivals should come at fifty-day intervals.

In Qumran law the new wine offering consists of four hin of wine, one-third of a hin from each tribe. Cereal offerings and twelve rams as burnt offerings accompany the libation, and other sacrifices are brought as well, based on Num 28:26. The ceremony takes place during the first quarter of the day. After the priests sacrifice the wine, “all the people both great and small” eat a feast in the outer courtyard and drink the new wine. The scroll repeatedly stresses that it is a time of rejoicing and celebration.

35. M. Menah. 106.
36. Ibid.
37. See the fragment discussed by Baumgarten (Studies, 133–35) for prohibition against secular use. See 11QTemple XXI 7–8 (Yadin, Temple Scroll, 2:94) and Yadin’s reconstruction of XXII 02–03 (2:98) for prohibition against cultic use. And see Baumgarten’s review of Yadin, JBL 97 (1978) 584–85.
38. Philo Special Laws 2.179–80, like the Qumran sect and against the rabbis, understood the Bible to prohibit use of new wheat until Shavuot. See also the sectarian tradition cited by Saadia, ascribed to “Judah the Alexandrian” (probably a medieval appellation for Philo) but almost identical to the Qumran tradition (cited in Baumgarten, Studies, 136 n. 21).
39. Grain, new wine and oil (דגמים ו RGBA/CAB) is a Deuteronomistic favorite (Deut 7:13, 11:14, 12:17, 14:23, 18:14, 28:51) and quite routine in the rest of the Bible as well (Jer 31:11; Hos 2:10; Joel 1:10; 2 Chr 31:5, 32:18; Neh 5:17, 10:40, 13:5, 13:12). Baumgarten (Studies, 142) suggests that the Qumran exegetes understood from Exod 22:28 that an offering from each major species was required.
40. In Num 15:7 one-third of a hin of wine accompanies a ram offered as a neder or nēdabā.
41. Surprisingly the raison d’être of this feast seems to contradict other sources which suggest that the sect abstained from wine. Josephus, for example, omits wine in his description of Essene meals and stresses that they are always sober (J.W. 2:303). Yadin (Temple Scroll, 1:40, 142) resolved this contradiction by arguing that the sect
The Qumran wine festival recalls the account of the first vintage celebration, observed by Noah and his family, found in Jub. 7:1–6:

(1) And in the seventh week in the first year in that Jubilee, Noah planted a vine on the mountain on which the ark rested, whose name is Lubar, (one) of the mountains of Ararat. And it produced fruit in the fourth year, and he guarded its fruit; and he picked it in that year in the seventh month, (2) and he made wine from it, and he put it in a vessel, and he guarded it until the fifth year, until the first day on the first of the first month. (3) And on that day he made a feast with rejoicing. And he made a burnt offering... (5) And after that, he sprinkled wine in the fire which he had placed on the altar. And he presented frankincense upon the altar, and offered up a sweet odor which is pleasing before the Lord his God, (6) and rejoiced. And he drank some of that wine, he and his sons, with rejoicing. 43

This festival is not an annual festival of the new wine, as in the Qumran scrolls, but relates to the first permitted consumption of fruit of a newly planted tree or vine (the law of ‘orād). Lev 19:23–25 prohibits consumption of the fruit during the first three years and enjoins “on the fourth year, all of its fruit shall be set aside for jubilation before the Lord. On the fifth year, you shall eat its fruit, that it may yield increased produce for you.” Exactly what should be done with it in the fourth year and what “set aside for jubilation”

drank no wine at secular banquets but imbibed at the meals of Temple feasts. He eventually concluded that this was the only day of the year on which the sect drank wine. Yadin has probably overinterpreted Josephus here, who only means to portray the Essenes as highly disciplined religious virtuosos. See 1QS II 17–22, VI 4–5 (cited by Yadin himself, Temple Scroll, 2.140) and 1QH X 24, which prove that the sect did drink wine regularly. See also Baumgarten’s review of Yadin, JBL 97 (108) 588. But if Yadin is correct, then the wine feast must have been of great importance. On this day alone even members of the sect renounced their usual abstinence, drank copiously of the new wine, and celebrated joyfully.

42. 11QTemple XXI 9–10 (Yadin, Temple Scroll, 2.95): “And they shall rejoice on [this day], [for they began] to pour out a strong drink offering, a new wine on the altar of the Lord, year by year.” So the Rockefeller fragment (PAM 43.975, cited in Yadin, Temple Scroll, 2.91), lines 13–14. According to cols. XLIII–XLIV and Jub. 32:11–14, the consumption of the second tithe depends on the firstfruit festivals. Each year the tithes of oil, wine, and grain may only be consumed until the appropriate firstfruit festival of the coming year. Thus the tithes of wine had to be drank prior to the third of the fifth month, the festival of the firstfruits of wine. Tithes not consumed by the deadlines were to be burned. This interpretation was far more strict than the rabbinic law, by which tithes could be stored until the “time of removal” (m. Ma‘at. Š. 5:6) every fourth year at Pesah (based on Deut 26:12). Moreover, the Temple Scroll restricts consumption of tithes to the festivals and prohibits their consumption on “working days” (XLIV 16). It is likely that the tithes of wine were consumed at the wine feast, since they would have to be burned if retained after this date. See Baumgarten, Studies, 147–48; Yadin, Temple Scroll, 1.114–16; 2.181–84.

43. Translation from O. S. Winternute, “Jubilees,” in OTP, 2.68–69.
designates was disputed. In rabbinic law these fruits (ⱱⱬ) are brought to the temple and eaten there by the owner. From Noah's actions it appears that the author of the Jubilees passage envisioned a popular festival at which the wine from the fourth year is consumed, although the festival only takes place on the first day of the fifth year. He interpreted the direction that the fruit be "set aside for jubilation" to mean that wine be set aside during that year and then used "for jubilation" at a later time. The festival must be deferred until the fifth year, for the verse only permits the owner to eat the fruits then. Whether this protocol should be maintained with all fruits, as Leviticus implies, or grapes alone, is uncertain. In any case, the vivid description of Noah's festival points to a wine festival of great joy, like that in the Qumran scrolls. Noah both sprinkles wine as a libation on the altar and then drinks from that wine. Note too that Noah picks the grapes in the seventh month, when Sukkot occurs, although he only celebrates the festival in the first month of the following year.

A similar tradition appears in several lines of the Genesis Apocryphon recently published by Menahem Kister, which the editors of the initial publication, N. Avigad and Y. Yadin, were not able to read. The passage is an account of Noah's wine festival parallel to that of Jub. 7:1-7. Kister supplies the following translation:

13. [And] I and all my sons began to till the soil, and I planted a large vineyard in Mount Lubar. After four years it yielded wine for me.

44. Part of the dispute may derive from a textual variant, whether to read הָלִילִים (jubilation') or חָוָלִים (redemption'). See Kister, "Qumranic Halakhah" (see below, n. 48), 577 and the references in n. 31. The view of this passage is supported by the law of Jub. 7:36, cited below, in which the priests receive the fruit of the fourth year.

45. M. Ma'as. Š. 5:1-5. Josephus also asserts that the produce of the fourth year must be taken to the holy city and spent "along with the tithe of his other fruits, in feasting with his friends, as also with orphans and widows" (Ant. 4.226).

46. See the remarkable parallel attributed (and dismissed as a corruption) by Tosfot, b. Rosh Ḥaft. 10a, s.v. ṣepor to Halakhot Gedolot: "And there are [versions of] Halakhot Gedolot in which it is written, 'The fruits of the fourth year, after they have been redeemed, are forbidden until [the fourth year, and the fifth begins]." (In Jubilees, however, Noah merely sets aside the fruit; he does not redeem it.) Maimonides, Mishneh Torah, Laws of Forbidden Foods 10:18 attributes this ruling to the Geonim, and rejects it.


The Sukkot Wine Libation

14. _____ all _____ vac and when the first festival (rigla') arrived, on the first
day of the first festival of month
15. [_____] [_____] my vineyard, this kura? I opened, and I began
drinking it on the first day of the fifth year
16. [_____] [_____] on this day I called my sons and my sons' sons and the
wives of all of us, and their daughters, and we met together and went
17. [_____] [_____] and I blessed the Lord of heaven, the Most High God,
the Great Holy One, who saved us from destruction.

The “first festival” is apparently Sukkot, and it is on the first day of the festi-
val that the kura', which Kister suggests is a type of vessel, is opened.49
Kister takes this to mean that the vessel was opened and filled with wine and
that the wine was “gathered in,” which would parallel Jub. 7:1–3. But Jubilees
refers to the seventh month, and the Genesis Apocryphon speaks of the first
day of the festival. It cannot be that the labor of gathering in wine was con-
ducted on the festival day. Rather, the text probably means that the vessel
was opened and the wine used for a cultic ceremony on the festival. As in Ju-
bilees, secular consumption of the wine was deferred until the beginning of the
fifth year, when Noah and his family drink, to conform with Lev 19:25.
Kister also mentions that Qimron deciphered the words “And I poured out
... wine” in lines 18 and 19, which allude to a libation. That libation was
presumably performed by Noah at his festival in the fifth year. Could the ves-
sel have been opened and the wine used as a libation on Sukkot in the fourth
year as well?

A second passage from Jubilees in fact describes a wine offering in the fourth
year (Jub. 7:35–36):

49. The designation of Sukkot as the “first festival” or “first pilgrimage” is rare.
Sukkot is the first pilgrimage festival after Rosh Hashanah, the New Year, and cer-
tainly could be designated the “first festival” on this basis. But Rosh Hashanah and
Sukkot occur in the seventh month, and Pesah is the first festival according to the cy-
cle of months. T. Ṭaḥa. t. 1 (b, Ṭaḥa. t. 4b–b) and i. Ṭaḥa. 3:17–18 indeed desig-
nate Pesah the first of the pilgrimage festivals. See also the references cited in S. Lie-
berman, Tosefta Kū-fuğah (Jerusalem: Jewish Theological Society, 1992) 5.1017–18.
Moreover, Sukkot is the final harvest festival of the agricultural cycle. However,
657–58) contains a series of derašot that designate Sukkot as “the first.” The exegeti-
cal difficulty is that the festival falls on the fifteenth day of the month, but Lev 23:43
instructs “you shall take on the first day.” The derašot explain that the verse does not
mean the first day of the month, but that Sukkot is called “first,” either because it is
the first time that rains should fall or the first opportunity to study Torah since the
harvest labors have been completed or the beginning of a new reckoning of merit and
sin. See too the fragments published by L. Ginsberg (“Three Incomplete Homilies
from an Unknown Midrash,” Tarbiz 4 [1933] 328 [Heb.]), which contain a similar tra-
dition, and Pesiqta de Rab Kahana (ed. B. Mandelbaum; New York: Jewish Theologi-
cal Seminary, 1987) 4:10–13 ad 27:7. I am not sure, however, that these midrashic
explanations of the meaning of “first day” shed light on Sukkot as the “first festival.”
You will plant in them (your cities) every plant which is upon earth and every tree, moreover, which bears fruit. For three years its fruit will not be gathered from everything which may be eaten, but in the fourth year its fruit will be gathered. And let one offer up the firstfruits which are acceptable before the Lord Most High, who made heaven and earth and everything, so that they might offer up in the juice the first of the wine and the oil as firstfruits upon the altar of the Lord, who will accept it. And that which is left the servants of the house of the Lord will eat before the altar which receives (it). 50

In this passage a portion of the wine of the fourth year is offered on the altar as a firstfruit offering. 51 The remainder is eaten by the "servants of the house of the Lord," that is, the priests. 52 This contradicts in part Jubilees' account of Noah's celebration, for Noah sets aside the wine and then consumes it in the fifth year. So too in the Genesis Apocryphon Noah, not the priests, ultimately consumes the wine in the fifth year. But perhaps it is a firstfruit offering such as this for which the Genesis Apocryphon dictates that the vessel be opened on the first day of Sukkot.

The Testament of Levi, generally dated to the 2d century B.C.E. and thus roughly contemporaneous with Jubilees, also mentions a firstfruit offering of wine: "And of all your firstfruits and wine bring the very first as a sacrifice to the Lord God." 53 As in the Qumran texts, the firstfruit sacrifice is an annual offering. Now in this section of the Testament, Levi relates what his grand-

51. Kister ("Qumranic Halakhah," 582) suggests that the firstfruits of the fourth-year wine were offered on the altar, and the priests received the rest.
52. This tradition interpreted qedeš of Lev 19:24 as 'set aside' for the priests. Kister ("Qumranic Halakhah," 578) points out that this interpretation (probably the pesher; see Ibn Ezra and Abravanel, ad loc.) follows from the promise of Lev 19:25, "that its yield may increase for you." The yield will increase in the fifth year as compensation for giving the fruits of the fourth year to the priests. Jub. 7:36 accordingly interpreted that the owner does not enjoy any of the fruit until then. 11QTemple LX 2–4 also rules that the fruit of the fourth year belongs to the priests; see Yadin, Temple Scroll, 1.66–73, 2.471–72. QMMT seems to contain a similar ruling. See Sussmann, "The History of Halakhah," 33; and Qimron and Strugnell, DJD 10, B 62–63, pp. 53–55, 764–65: "And concerning the (fruits of) the trees for food planted in the Land of Israel: they are to be dealt with like first fruits belonging to the priests." The Samaritans, Karaite, and Tg. Pa.-J. to Lev 19:24 rule that the fruit belongs to the priests; see C. Albeck, Das Buch der Jubiläen und die Halacha (Berlin, 1935) 32; and M. Kashem, Targum Hatonah, part 2: Torah Shelemah (Jerusalem: American Biblical Encyclopedia Society, 1962) 35.81–84. Sipe Bemidbar, 9–10, §6 is aware of this interpretation but rejects it.
53. T. Levi 9:14. Some textual witnesses omit the words "a sacrifice," leaving "the very first to the Lord God." The context, in any event, makes it clear that a sacrifice is intended. See R. H. Charles, "Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs," APOT, 2.48. Charles reconstructs the original Hebrew as יִתֶּשֶׁר, as in Ezek 44:30 and Sir 45:20.
father Isaac admonished him concerning his future duties as priest. Isaac's injunctions consist of laws that apply exclusively to priests: for example, to wash before and after sacrificing, to bring sacrifices from every clean living animal and bird, and to salt every sacrificial offering. It is likely, then, that the commandment to bring the first of the firstfruits and wine as a sacrifice is directed to the priests. Of course the priests would have had to receive such gifts from the people, as in fact Num 18:12-13 prescribes.54 The Testament accordingly adds that the priests do not gain absolute possession of all the firstfruits but must offer a portion as a sacrifice to God, to whom the firstfruits belong.55 If this analysis is correct, then the Testament of Levi is consistent with Jub. 7:36. It differs from the Temple Scroll in which new wine serves as a corporate offering and is subsequently consumed by all the people in a festive meal.56 In any case, like the Qumran texts and Jub. 7:36, the Testament prescribes a sacrifice of firstfruits of wine.57

Rabbinic halakhah limited the comprehensive biblical requirement to bring firstfruits from all agricultural products.58 Firstfruits were restricted to the "seven species": wheat, barley, grape, fig, pomegranate, olive, and date.59 Tannaitic sources distinguish whether liquids, including wine and oil, are admissible as firstfruit offerings. M. Ter. 11:3 ordains that no liquids may be brought as firstfruits except olive and grape derivatives. Wine, accordingly, is eligible as a firstfruit offering. Similarly, Mekilta de Rabbi Ishmael, Kapha §20 rules:

The choicest first fruits of your land (Exod 23:19). Why is this section said? Because it says: You shall take some of every first fruit of the soil (Deut 26:2). I know only that fruits are to be brought as the first-fruit offering. Whence [do I know about] liquids? It teaches: You shall bring into the house of the Lord your God—in

54. So too Ezek 44:30, Jub. 7:36.
55. The older legislation does not make clear what happens to the firstfruits. Exod 23:19 and 34:26 (so Neh 10:36) instruct the firstfruits to be taken to the "House of the Lord your God," while Deut 26:4 and 26:14 have the pilgrim place the basket before the altar. In both cases the priests probably took possession of the gifts. Deut 18:4 rules that rē's'īt of grain, wine, and oil must be given to the priest, but it is unclear whether the same applied to the bikhōrim, the firstfruits.
56. It is possible, however, that the Testament author omitted these details of the festival, focusing exclusively on priestly concerns.
57. C. Albeck (Sifḥot Sidre Mitzvot [6 vols.; Jerusalem: Bialik / Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1954-59] 1.411) claims that the passage is to be interpreted in light of Lev 2:12. The offering of wine is not a firstfruit offering but a sacrifice upon the altar. Albeck here struggles with the contradiction between this passage and rabbinic halakhah, which frowns upon wine as a firstfruit offering (see below). Baumgarten (Studies, 140), on the basis of the Qumran texts, points out that Albeck's distinction is unnecessary. Wine was brought both as firstfruit offering and as sacrifice. See also Kister's suggestion (above, n. 51).
58. See n. 11.
any form. And what is the difference between these? Those [who bring fruits]
bring and recite,\textsuperscript{60} while those [who bring liquids] bring and do not recite.\textsuperscript{61}

Although liquids are legitimate firstfruit offerings, they are somewhat less
“appropriate” than full-fledged fruit, so one who brings liquids may not recite
the liturgical formula that generally accompanies the offerings. Similarly, Tg.
Ps.-J. to Exod 22:28 enjoin[s] that “the firstfruits of your fruits and the first-
fruits of the wine of your vat you shall not delay.” However, Sipre Deut. §297
rules that wine and oil may not be brought as firstfruits,\textsuperscript{62} and m. Hal.
4:11 reports that when Joseph the Priest brought wine and oil as firstfruits, his
offering was not accepted.\textsuperscript{63} Given the nonrabbinic sources and the comprehen-
sive biblical requirement to bring firstfruits from all produce, the opinion
that wine and oil may be brought as firstfruits seems to represent an earlier
halakah. Later the obligation was limited to the seven species and to dry
fruits, and other restrictions were promulgated as well.\textsuperscript{64}

The Wine Libation as Firstfruit Ritual

Five distinct sources—the Qumran Scrolls, Jubilees, Testament of Levi, the
Genesis Apocryphon, and rabbinc texts—relate that new wine featured in
some form at a firstfruit festival or as a firstfruit offering. In (most) rabbinc
traditions the wine is brought with other firstfruits and left at the base of the
altar; in the Temple Scroll and the Testament of Levi it is offered upon the altar.
The Qumran scrolls, Jub. 7:1–6, and the Genesis Apocryphon have the
people participate in the festival by drinking the new wine.\textsuperscript{65} The sample

\textsuperscript{60} The prescribed liturgy, Deut 26:5–10.

\textsuperscript{61} H. Horovitz (ed.), Mekila de Rabbi Ishmael (Jerusalem: Wahrman, 1960) 335.

\textsuperscript{62} “You shall take some of every firstfruit of the soil (Deut 26:2)—fruit. You are to
bring fruit as firstfruits, but you are not to bring wine and oil as firstfruits”; L. Finkel-
stein (ed.), Sipre Debarim (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1979) 317. A similar
baraita is cited in b. ‘Aran. 113 (= b. Hal. 120b) and attributed to R. Yose. However,
that baraita concludes that one may indeed bring wine as a firstfruit offering.

\textsuperscript{63} Y. Hal. 4:11, 60b resolves the contradictory sources by ruling that if one gath-
ered grapes with the intention that they be made into wine and brought as firstfruits
in that state, it is permitted, but if one did not have that intention when the grapes
were harvested and subsequently made into wine, that wine is inadmissible as a first-
fruit offering. B. Hal. 120b offers a different resolution. See Y. N. Epstein, Mavo Le-
nusah Hamifnah (2d ed.; Jerusalem: Magnes / Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1964) 304 n. 2.

\textsuperscript{64} Sipre Deut. 599, §301; m. Bik. 1:10 and m. Hal. 4:11 limit the area from
which firstfruits may be brought. But Josephus Ant. 16:172 reports that the Jews of
Asia Minor brought firstfruits to Jerusalem. M. Bik. 1:10 and Sipre Deut. 317, §297
rule that those who bring firstfruits before Shavuot or after Sukkot may not recite the
Deuteronomistic liturgy. However, Philo Special Laws 2.220–22 knows of no such
restriction. See Sipre Debarim, 599, §301 and m. Bik. 1:10 for other limitations.

\textsuperscript{65} Assuming that Noah’s festival in Jub. 7:1–6 and in the Genesis Apocryphon is
paradigmatic.
includes both prescriptive legal texts (Temple Scroll, Jub. 7:36, most rabbinic sources) and narrative accounts (Noah in Jub. 7:1–6 and the Genesis Apocryphon, and the account of Joseph the High Priest in m. Hal. 4:11), and thus points to a real practice. Even if we consider the rigid pentacontad structure of the Temple Scroll a hypothetical construction of the utopian calendar, the legislation stemmed from a popular practice of bringing new wine to the Temple and offering it as a sacrifice. Indeed, it is precisely because of disputes over the calendar that the different sources prescribe the festival for different times. Each placed the wine festival at the appropriate time for its calendrical scheme.

These sources suggest that the Sukkot wine libation may have originated as the firstfruit offering of the new wine consumed at a wine festival. On the autumnal festival the people gave thanks to God for the grapes and wine by offering new wine as a libation. By Sukkot the vintage was generally over. The grapes, having been placed in wineskins or vats, ferment in a matter of hours, so there was ample time to make wine before the festival.66 The celebrations described in Judges suggest that the autumnal festival celebrated the vintage specifically, so the wine libation may go back to the earliest strata of the festival.67

That a firstfruit offering of wine was brought on Sukkot also makes sense from a logistical point of view. The people aspired to come up to Jerusalem for Pesah, Shavuot, and Sukkot, so to make an additional pilgrimage specifically to present firstfruits was undoubtedly a hardship. Albeck cites Tob 1:6–7 as evidence that rural residents brought their firstfruits on the pilgrimage festivals when they would travel to Jerusalem to celebrate.68

66. Grapes were sometimes crushed in the hand into a cup and immediately drunk, as in the dream of Pharaoh’s cupbearer, Gen 40:10–11. See S. Krauss, Talmudische Archäologie (3 vols.; Leipzig: Fock, 1910–12) 2:233.

67. It is true that Jub. 7:1–6 and the Genesis Apocryphon have Noah drink on the first day of the first month, not on Sukkot. But they are motivated by the constraint placed by Lev 19:25 that the fruit may not be consumed until the fifth year. So they allow Noah to consume the fruit at the earliest possible point, the first day of the first month. Rabbinic halakhah, we noted, treated the fruits as second tithe and allowed the owner to consume them in Jerusalem, so there was no need to defer the celebration to the first of the fifth year. The associated festival could be observed on Sukkot of the fourth year, where indeed the Genesis Apocryphon mentions that something took place. Similarly, the new wine festival of the Qumran scrolls occurs on the third of the fifth month because of the pentacontad structure of its solar calendar. The rabbinic or proto-rabbinic calendar was not governed by that concern. Thus the fact that the dates of the festivals of new wine or firstfruit are not associated specifically with Sukkot does not militate against my hypothesis. The sources are trying to fit the wine festival into their calendars.

68. Albeck, Miḥnah, 1:307. See above, p. 578, on the pilgrimage festivals as firstfruit celebrations in ancient times. According to rabbinic halakhah, firstfruits may be brought only from Shavuot to Sukkot. Philo (Special Laws 2.216) relates that the season
I alone used often to journey to Jerusalem at the feasts, as it had been ordained in all Israel by an everlasting decree. I used to go to Jerusalem with the firstfruits and the firstlings and the tenths of the cattle and the first shearings of the sheep, and give them to the priests, the sons of Aaron, for the altar. . . .

Since grapes only ripened in August and September, there was little opportunity prior to Sukkot to bring firstfruits of grapes or wine. Peasants were preoccupied with the arduous vintage labors in any case. After the vintage, on Sukkot, when the farmers made their way to Jerusalem for the festival, it was the perfect time to bring a firstfruit offering of new wine as well.

If a wine-feast accompanied the libation, as in Qumran law, we may also have a component of Simhat bet hasho'evah ('rejoicing at the place of water-drawing'), the all-night festival celebrated in the Temple courtyard. Both the Qumran account of the wine feast and the description of Simhat bet hasho'evah emphasize joy and rejoicing. The dancing, singing, joy, and general gaiety that the Mishnah associates with this nocturnal ritual are perfectly understandable as repercussions of rejoicing with wine. If not Simhat bet hasho'evah specifically, then the emphasis on cultic simhah ('rejoicing') in connection with Sukkot may reflect a wine feast. True, simhah is associated with sacrificial meat and hence with the other pilgrimage festivals as well. And the elation at the completed autumn harvest and vintage helps to explain the emphasis on festal joy. But wine, as divine gift, the drink that "gladdens God and men," bears a special association with joy and simhah. Against this background the exhortation to be 'ak samah 'to have nothing but joy' (Deut 16:15) is fully understandable. It should also be noted that Plutarch associated Sukkot with the vintage, Dionysian rites (which included wine-drink-

69. M. Sukk. 5:1-5.
70. As are the rabbinic traditions concerning lewd behavior and wildness that occurred during the night; t. Sukk. 4:1, y. Sukk. 5:4, 55b. Songs and music accompanied the pressing of grapes, Isa 5:12, and enhanced drinking parties, Isa 24:9, Amos 6:5-6, Ps 69:13, Sir 40:20. Note that Psalms 8:1, 82, and 84 are preceded by the superscription "al hagggit. While most modern scholars generally concede that the meaning is unknown, some derive gitty from giti 'winepress' and interpret the phrase as 'for the winepress', perhaps alluding to the instruments used during vintage celebrations. The term is understood in this sense by the LXX, the Vulgate, and Mibra Tehillim to Ps 8:1 and 84:1. Ps 81:5-6, moreover, is clearly intended for Sukkot, the festival alluded to in v. 4. See Kittel, Psalmen, 299-301.
ing) and revelry. Of course his evidence cannot be taken as decisive, but his source does have quite accurate information on the building of booths, the taking of the lulav, the dress of the High Priest, and some details of sacrificial legislation. A wine festival would explain why Plutarch pictured Dionysian rites. The wine libation was probably a firstfruit offering, and may have been accompanied by a feast and imbibation. Like the water-libation, it points to an important dimension of the ancient festival of Sukkot.

75. An earlier version of this paper appears in my History of Sukkot during the Second Temple and Rabbinic Periods (Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1991) 229–46.